

REMARKS

I. Amendments

Applicants have amended claim 23 to recite a noise-dampening shim in a similar manner as recited in claim 11. In view of the amendment to claim 23, claim 24 has been cancelled.

Applicants have added new claims 26-32 which depend upon claims 11, 23 and 25.

New claim 26 recites that the first coupler member is integrally formed with the backing plate. Support for claim 26 is found on page 7, lines 3-15 of the specification as originally filed.

New claims 27, 29 and 31 recite that the rim of the second coupler member or the rim of the shim has a tubular section having a first rim diameter, and a connection section having a second rim diameter which is larger than the first rim diameter. These features are disclosed on page 6, lines 4-10 of the specification as originally filed. New claims 27, 29 and 31 also recite that the enlarged section of the stem of the first coupler member or the enlarged section of the stem of the backing plate has a stem diameter which is larger than the first rim diameter of the tubular section of the rim. Support for this feature is found on page 8, lines 9-11, and page 9, lines 26-29, of the specification as originally filed.

New claims 28, 30 and 32 recite that the enlarged section of the stem is formed as an enlarged head that is slanted from the distal end of the stem. Support for this feature is found on page 8, lines 12-13 of the specification as originally filed.

Upon entry of this Amendment, claims 11, 15, 20-23, and 25-32 are pending. No new matter has been added by any amendment herein.

II. Request for withdrawal premature Office Action

Applicants filed a Request for Continued Examination ("RCE") on April 29, 2005. In their RCE transmittal, Applicants requested a three-month suspension of prosecution. Applicants intended to file additional amendments before the end of the suspension period, which was to have expired on July 29, 2005.

However, on July 19, 2005, the PTO mailed an Office Action to Applicants. The Office Action was premature as it was issued before the conclusion of the suspension period.

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Applicants contacted the Examiner to discuss this matter, and were informed that the RCE was improperly processed by the PTO due to error and as a consequence, an Office Action was issued. Applicants and the Examiner agreed that Applicants would file an Amendment to enter additional claim amendments, and that the Examiner would examine the application in view of these newly-amended claims. The Examiner also stated that in view of the situation, the next Office Action would not be made final. These actions would have the effect of withdrawing the premature Office Action and prosecuting the claims as amended herein.

Applicants have proceeded as agreed with the Examiner. Accordingly, Applicants request entry of the amendments provided herein, and examination of the claims as amended.

III. Conclusion

Upon entry of this Amendment, claims 11, 15, and 20-23, and 25-32 are pending. Applicants respectfully request examination of the claims as amended herein.

Authorization is hereby given to charge any fee which may be due in connection with this communication to Deposit Account No. 23-1703.

Dated: July 29, 2005

Respectfully submitted,



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